

# Anti-Semitism Informational Packet



From  
Etown Hillel

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANTI-SEMITISM

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## Definition of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism refers to prejudice and/or discrimination against Jews as individuals and as a group. Anti-Semitism is based on stereotypes and myths that target Jews as a people, their religious practices and beliefs, and the Jewish State of Israel.

Historically, what began as a conflict over religious beliefs evolved into a systematic policy of political, economic, and social isolation; exclusion, degradation and attempted annihilation. It did not begin in the Nazi era, nor did it end with the close of World War II. Its continuance over the millennia speaks to the power of scapegoating<sup>1</sup> a group that is defined as the “other.”

## Biblical Times

Abraham, the father of three major monotheistic<sup>2</sup> religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), led his family to Canaan almost 1,000 years before the Common Era (BCE), where a new nation—the people of Israel—came into being. During those centuries before Christ, the Hebrews (the early Jewish people) experienced intermittent persecution because they refused to adopt the religion of the locale or ruler and worship the idols of the kingdoms of the Middle East, as was the custom at the time. This refusal to worship idols was seen as stubborn and was resented.

## Anti-Judaism

After the advent of Christianity, a new anti-Judaism evolved. Initially, Christianity was seen as simply another Jewish sect, since Jesus and the Disciples were Jewish and preached a form of Judaism. In the year 70 C.E.,<sup>3</sup> the Romans destroyed the Jewish State, and most Jews were scattered throughout the ancient world.

During the first few hundred years after the crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans, adherents of both Judaism and Christianity co-existed—sometimes peacefully, sometimes with animosity—as they sought to practice their faiths in the same lands.

With the conversion of the Roman emperors, Christianity became the sole established religion of the Roman Empire, and the early church fathers sought to establish Christianity as the successor to Judaism. The refusal of Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah was viewed as a threat to the Roman rulers and to Christianity. Since both religions came from the Old Testament, Christians sought to establish the validity of their new religion by claiming that it superseded<sup>4</sup> Judaism.

## The Middle Ages

During the next three centuries (300–600 C.E.) a new pattern of institutionalized<sup>5</sup> discrimination

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<sup>1</sup>Scapegoating: blaming an individual or group for something based on that person or group’s identity when, in reality, the person or group is not responsible.

<sup>2</sup>Monotheistic: adjective for the noun “monotheism,” which is the belief that there is only one God.

<sup>3</sup>C.E. (Common Era): the equivalent to A.D. which is Latin (anno Domini) for “in the year of the Lord,” referring to Jesus. Since the Christian reference is not recognized/accepted by many, the C.E. designation is seen as more inclusive.

<sup>4</sup>Superseded: to force out of use as inferior, to displace in favor of another.

<sup>5</sup>Institutionalized: as part of the system, such as the legal or economic systems.

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against Jews occurred: Jews were forbidden to marry Christians (399 C.E.), were prohibited from holding positions in government (439 C.E.) and were prevented from appearing as witnesses against Christians in court (531 C.E.). As Jews were officially being ostracized<sup>6</sup>, certain bizarre fantasies about Jews arose in Northern Europe that foreshadowed the anti-Semitism of the 20th century. It was alleged<sup>7</sup> that Jews had horns and tails and engaged in ritual murder of Christians. The latter allegation, referred to as “blood libel,” was devised by Thomas of Monmouth in 1150 to explain the mysterious death of a Christian boy. This theme recurs in English and German myths.

In 1095, Pope Urban II made a general appeal to the Christians of Europe to take up the cross and sword and liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims, beginning what was to be known as the Crusades. The religious fervor that drove men, and later even children, on the Crusades was to have direct consequences for Jews. The Crusader army, which more closely resembled a mob, swept through Jewish communities looting, raping and massacring Jews as they went. Thus the pogrom—the organized massacre of a targeted group of people—was born.

During the middle of the 14th century, the Bubonic Plague spread throughout Europe, killing an estimated one-third of the population. Fear, superstition and ignorance prompted the need to find someone to blame, and the Jews were a convenient scapegoat because of the myths and stereotypes that were already believed about them. Though Jews were also dying from the plague, they were accused of poisoning wells and spreading the disease. In Germany and Austria it is estimated that 100,000 Jews were burned alive for this and other false accusations including using the blood of Christian boys to make Passover Matzoth<sup>8</sup> and for desecrating sacramental wafers.<sup>9</sup> Stereotypes in Christian church art were used to inflame the masses.

Martin Luther, the founder of the 16th century Reformation and Protestantism, wrote a pamphlet in 1545 entitled *The Jews and Their Lies*, claiming that Jews thirsted for Christian blood and urging the slaying of the Jews. The Nazis reprinted it in 1935. Some scholars feel that these scurrilous attacks mark the transition from anti-Judaism (attacks motivated because of the Jews’ refusal to accept Christianity) to anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews as a so-called race that would contaminate the purity of another race).

Increasingly, Jews were subjected to political, economic and social discrimination, resulting in the deprivation of their legal and civil rights. They were restricted to living in ghettos and, beginning in the 13th century, Jews were required to wear a distinctive symbol (a badge and/or a pointed hat) so that they could be immediately recognized, an action that was revisited by the Nazis in the 20th century.

Since Jews were not allowed to own land and the Church did not allow Christians to loan money for profit, Jews had few alternatives but to become moneylenders. Once they became associated with the forbidden trade of usury—the practice of lending money and charging high interest—a new set of stereotypes evolved around the Jews as money-hungry and greedy. As moneylenders,

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<sup>6</sup>Ostracized: to exclude from a group by common consent.

<sup>7</sup>Alleged: to state as a fact but without proof.

<sup>8</sup>Matzoth: unleavened bread that is eaten during the Jewish holiday of Passover.

<sup>9</sup>Wafer: a round thin piece of bread used in the Christian ceremony that remembers the last supper of Jesus called Communion.

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Jews were frequently useful to rulers who used their capital to build cathedrals and outfit armies. As long as the Jews benefited the ruler, either through finance or by serving as convenient scapegoats, they were tolerated. When it suited the ruler, they were expelled<sup>10</sup>—from England in 1290, France in 1394, and Spain in 1492.

## Modern Anti-Semitism

The term “anti-Semitism” was coined in 1873 by Wilhelm Marr, a German political agitator in his work, *Victory of Judaism over Germanism*. His thesis was that Jews were conspiring to run the state and should be excluded from citizenship. In Russia, czarist<sup>11</sup> secret police published a forged collection of documents that became known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It told of a secret plot by rabbis to take over the world. Racism and anti-Semitism were also facilitated by the development of Social Darwinism and pseudo-scientific notions based on theories of racial superiority and inferiority.

In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew who was a captain in the French Army, was falsely accused and convicted of selling military secrets to the Germans. When evidence was discovered that Dreyfus was innocent, it was quickly covered up by French Officers of the General Staff who wanted to blame the crime on a Jew. Although Dreyfus was eventually vindicated<sup>12</sup>, “The Dreyfus Affair,” as it became known, showed how deep-rooted and pervasive anti-Semitism was in France.

In Russia, although most Jews themselves were extremely poor, they were blamed for all the problems of the Russian peasantry. Pogroms were instigated by the czarist secret police. In 1905, Russia’s loss in the Russo-Japanese War moved the government to incite a bloody pogrom in Kishinev. Between 1917 and 1921, after the Russian Revolution, more than 500 Jewish communities in the Ukraine were wiped out in pogroms. About 60,000 Jewish men, women and children were murdered.

Many have asked why anti-Semitic behavior turned into the genocide<sup>13</sup> of the Jewish community in Germany, rather than in France or England, or Russia, as all had a tradition of anti-Semitism. Following World War I, Germany was a deeply troubled country. Having lost the war, its citizens felt humiliated by the defeat. The victorious countries, including the United States, France and England, authored the Treaty of Versailles, a peace treaty which compelled Germany to give up territory and to pay reparations to countries whose lands it had damaged. Adolph Hitler was a demagogic<sup>14</sup> leader, and obedience to authority was a strong cultural norm in Germany. Hitler called upon remembered myths of the “blood libel” from the Middle Ages to evoke fear that the Jews would contaminate what he referred to as the superior Aryan race. Therefore, according to Hitler’s doctrine, all Jews and their genetic pool must be eliminated.

## The Holocaust

There may be no more succinct description of the Holocaust than the statement issued by the

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<sup>10</sup>Expelled: forced to leave, usually by official action.

<sup>11</sup>Czarist: of or related to the ruler of Russia.

<sup>12</sup>Vindicated: freed from blame.

<sup>13</sup>Genocide: the deliberate extermination of a group of people.

<sup>14</sup>Demagogic: like a person who appeals to other people’s emotions and prejudices in order to arouse discontent and to advance his or her political purposes.

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Vatican on March 12, 1998:

*"This century has witnessed an unspeakable tragedy, which can never be forgotten — the attempt by the Nazi regime to exterminate the Jewish people, with the consequent killing of millions of Jews. Women and men, old and young, children and infants, for the sole reason of their Jewish origin, were persecuted and deported. Some were killed immediately, while others were degraded, ill-treated, tortured and utterly robbed of their human dignity, and then murdered. Very few of those who entered the [concentration] camps survived, and those who did remained scarred for life. This was the Shoah."<sup>15</sup>*

Speaking to 60 theologians and clergy from around the world at a Vatican symposium October 30–November 1, 1997, Pope John Paul II recognized, "... erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long..." and "contributed to a lulling of many consciences" at the time of World War II, so that, while there were "Christians who did everything to save those who were persecuted, even to the point of risking their own lives, the spiritual resistance of many was not what humanity expected of Christ's disciples."

## Contemporary Anti-Semitism

After the Holocaust, after the world witnessed the horrors of Auschwitz, anti-Semitism became far less accepted. Seeing what anti-Semitism could lead to made peoples and nations ashamed of openly expressing anti-Semitism. In the case of the Catholic Church, it would eventually lead to real change, when in the 1960s, the Church removed the historic and dangerous charge against the Jewish people of being responsible for the death of Jesus.

Anti-Semitism did not completely disappear, but the events of World War II significantly inhibited its expression. As the decades passed, as memories faded and criticism of the Jewish State of Israel mounted, many of these inhibitions weakened. In recent years, there has been a concerning upsurge of anti-Semitism around the world. Some is directly connected to Israel—accusing Israel of age-old anti-Semitic charges, such as blood libels and using evil power to control the world.

Some manifestations of anti-Semitism are more indirect. The excessive criticism of Israel leads some people to feel more comfortable attacking Jews and Jewish institutions around the world. For example, during the recent war in Gaza, there were 220 anti-Semitic incidents in the United Kingdom and 113 in France. Others are expressing anti-Semitism in more traditional ways. For example, ADL polls have shown that large numbers of Europeans believe that their Jewish citizens are not loyal to the countries in which they live, and that they have a disproportionate amount of political and economic power.

This resurgence of anti-Semitism is a great concern, especially as we move further and further away from the lessons of the Holocaust. The Jewish people do have allies in the United States and around the world, however, who remember the lessons of history and are ready to stand against this very old and very sinister hatred.

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<sup>15</sup>Shoah: The Holocaust

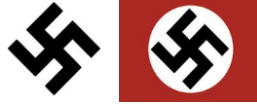


## Racially or Ethnically Motivated Groups: Symbols Guide

April 2022

**Summary:** The following symbols are used by racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) adherents of ideologies such as neo-Nazism, white nationalism, neo-paganism, and others. These symbols can be found in group logos, merchandise, propaganda, written materials, tattoos, etc. Symbols often have variations, and can be combined by RMVE adherents to create new imagery. Nazi Germany adopted symbols in the 1930s and 1940s from ancient cultures and alphabets to create an illusion of a pure Aryan culture. Current RMVE adherents continue to use such symbols to glorify Nazi Germany or illustrate a connection with ancient European cultures. Symbols can have legitimate, non-racist uses. The sole use of a symbol is not conclusive evidence of ideology or criminal RMVE activity and should be viewed in context with other information.

**Swastika:** Symbol which became notorious due to its use by Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany.



**Parteiadler/Nazi Eagle:** Used to symbolize the Nazi party.



**SS Bolts:** Symbol of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS), the elite soldiers of the regime which gathered police and military powers.



**Totenkopf/Death's Head:** Also associated with the Nazi SS.



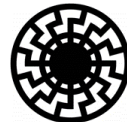
**Triskele/Triskelion:** Multiple variations, with three interlocking symbols appearing as sevens, legs, etc.



**Sturmabteilung (SA):** Used by Hitler's Brownshirts or Storm Troopers, which were paramilitary units used to violently intimidate opposition.



**Sonnenrad/Black Sun:** Used by the Nazi SS, SA, and other related entities.



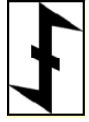
**Iron Cross:** Traditionally used as a military medal, the Nazi party added a swastika to the center.



**Fascis Symbol:** Imperial Roman symbol of state power and unity, used by the fascist movement in Italy.



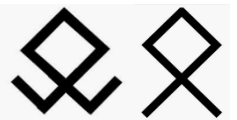
**Wolf's Hook/Wolfsangel:** An ancient German symbol based on the appearance of a wolf trap, appropriated by several SS divisions during the Nazi regime.



**Life Rune/Algiz:** Ancient runic symbol with several interpretations, signifying a tree or elk. Also incorporated into Nazi symbolism.



**Othala Rune/Norse Rune/Othala/Odal:** From a pre-Roman European alphabet, symbolizing the "o" sound. Appropriated by several SS divisions.



**Thor's Hammer:** Norse symbol adopted by racist practitioners of Asatru, Odinism, Wotanism and others who believe it signifies the strength and purity of the white race.



**Odin's Cross/Celtic Cross:** Dates back to ancient Europe. Popularized by the Ku Klux Klan, the website Stormfront, and used to represent "white pride."



**Valknot:** Norse symbol associated with the afterlife, often associated with Odin.



**Blood Drop Cross:** Typically associated with the KKK, the cross features a blood drop in the center representing blood shed for the white race.



**Phineas Priesthood:** Used by some, including Christian Identity adherents, who believe in a divine mandate to enforce God's law through violence.



### Common Numerical Symbols | Significant Dates

**14:** Signifies David Lane's 14 Words slogan ("We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children")

**88:** "Heil Hitler" (H is the 8th letter of the alphabet).

**14/88, 1488:** Combination of two numeric symbols, signifies support of white power and Hitler.

**18:** Signifies AH, meaning Adolf Hitler. A is the first letter of the alphabet, H is the 8th.

**311:** Signifies the KKK (K is the 11<sup>th</sup> letter of the alphabet, 3 11s equal KKK)

**4/19:** Last day of the Waco siege (1993) and date of the Oklahoma City Bombing (1995)

**4/20:** Adolf Hitler's birthday

**12/8:** Death of The Order member Robert Jay Mathews during 1984 standoff with FBI ("Martyr's Day")



## Symbols Use by Enduring RMVE Influences

Aryan Nations (US):



**National Socialist Order**  
(Successor of the disbanded  
**Atomwaffen Division**, 2015-2020):



National Alliance (US):



National Socialist Movement (US):



**The Base, AKA Project Omega:**



Hammerskin Nation (International):



Nordic Resistance Movement  
(International):



**Rise Above Movement:**



Blood & Honour (International)  
Combat 18 (International)



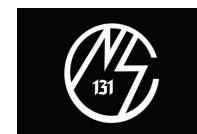
**Patriot Front:**



Azov Battalion (Ukrainian Militia):



**NSC-131: (Nationalist Social Club - Anti-Communist Action):**



## Significant / Influential RMVE Attacks

**Anders Breivik** – 22 July 2011 in Norway targeting government offices and summer youth camp affiliated with the Norwegian Labour Party: killed 77, injured 319.

**Dylann Roof** – 17 June 2015 in Charleston, SC targeting African Americans at a church, killed 9, injured 1.

**Robert Bowers** – 27 October 2018 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania targeting Jews at a synagogue, killed 11, injured 7.

**Brenton Tarrant** – 15 March 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand targeting Muslims at mosques, killed 51, injured 49.

**Patrick Crusius** – 3 August 2019 in El Paso, TX targeting Hispanics at a retail store, killed 23, injured 23.

## REPORT

# 2023 Online Holocaust Denial Report Card

Published: 04.10.2023

Platform	Explicit Holocaust denial policy?	General hate policy?	Effective product-level efforts to address Holocaust denial?	Response within 24 hours?	Notification of policy reason for enforcement?	Action taken for average user?	Action taken for trusted partner?	Grade in 2021	Grade in 2023
Twitch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (average user)	No	Yes (partial)	Yes (partial)	B	C+
YouTube	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (trusted partner)	Yes (trusted partner)	No	Yes	C	C+
TikTok	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (trusted partner)	No	No	Yes	C	C-
Riot Games (League of Legends)	No	Yes	No	Yes (average user)	Yes (average user)	Yes	N/A	N/A	C-
Facebook (including Instagram)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (trusted partner)	No	No	Yes	D	C-
Reddit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (trusted partner)	No	No	Yes	D	C-
Discord	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (trusted partner)	No	No	Yes	D	C-
Twitter	No	Yes	No	Yes (trusted partner)	No	No	Yes	C	D-
Activision Blizzard (Call of Duty)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	N/A	D-
Epic Games (Fortnite)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	F

Note: In creating this framework for evaluating the efforts of digital social platforms, we weighted enforcement more heavily than policy and explicit policies more heavily than general policies. Additionally, because no platform had affirmative results in every category, we did not award any platform an "A."

## Executive Summary



# **Helpful Resources:**

**ADL's Hate Symbol Database:**

<https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbols/search>

**ADL's Holocaust Denial Report Card:**

<https://www.adl.org/resources/report/2023-online-holocaust-denial-report-card>

**Brief History on Anti-Semitism:**

<https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Brief-History-on-Anti-Semitism-A.pdf>

**Department of Justice Racially or Ethnically Motivated Groups Symbol Guide:**

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/RMVE\\_Symbols\\_Guide.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/RMVE_Symbols_Guide.pdf)



<https://www.stopantisemitism.org/>

**Information about The Anti-Defamation League:**

<https://www.adl.org/about/mission-and-history>

## **ADL / Global 100**

**The Anti-Defamation League has released its ADL Global 100 study which measures public attitudes and opinions toward Jews in over 100 countries.**

<https://global100.adl.org/map>

**Report an Antisemitic, Bias or Discriminatory Incident to ADL**

**If you are in an emergency, please dial 911.**

<https://www.adl.org/report-incident>